



U.S. Department of Justice

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EVENT: Safe Child Wrap-up

SAFE CHILD SUCCESS STORY

More than 75 parents, teachers and other public leaders attended the first community forum on Child Exploitation, Prevention and Enforcement hosted by U.S. Attorney Stephen J. Murphy at the Oakland County Government Center last night.

The event, held at the Oakland County Board of Commissioner's Auditorium, consisted of a panel of highly skilled and educated prosecutors and law enforcement officials who addressed the hidden dangers that the Internet poses as it becomes more accessible to on-line sexual predators, abusers and pornographers who target our children. Compelling presentations were made by Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca, FBI Special Agent in Charge Dan Roberts, Department of Justice Child Exploitation chief Drew Oosterbaan, and FBI Child Forensic Interviewer Katie Connell – as well as United States Attorney Murphy and senior members of his staff.

"This all star panel and the sizable number of citizens who came out to hear from it gives me great satisfaction: it means that our efforts to work with the community, to hear from them and to dialogue on the issue of criminal exploitation of children is working," said an obviously exhilarated United States Attorney Murphy.

The event was also the sort of community interaction called for by Attorney General Alberto Gonzales in his new Project Safe Childhood initiative. It was the first such forum to be held by a United States Attorney in conjunction with that initiative.

All citizens who attended were provided the necessary tools and information to help detect and report possible crimes being committed over the Internet. Attendees were also provided with written and other materials designed to heighten awareness about child exploitation as well as to explain ways in which parents might detect and stop these crimes against children.

The event provided an opportunity for the public to become more aware of United States Attorney Murphy's aggressive, three month old strategy to prevent, investigate and prosecute individuals to seek to harm children. Specifically, the panelists described a joint strategy for building on existing partnerships with state and local law enforcement agencies to capitalize on the experience each agency brings in the fight against child predators. In addition, policies were evaluated under scenarios that would enable prosecutors to seek the maximum legally permissible sentences in such cases. Finally, the panel discussed plans to intensify and redouble enforcement and community education programs.

Stefanie S., a school bus driver and parent from Farmington Hills, said she was happy Murphy made an effort to bring this group into the community. She indicated that the information provided and the level of commitment shown by the public officials was impressive.

"This panel turned the spotlight on a dark corner of the Internet," said U.S. Attorney Murphy, "I am confident that this type of program is offers an effective model that could be duplicated by other United States Attorney's Offices across the country as we try to implement the Attorney General's directives to take action."

Mr. Murphy expressed thanks to the panelists who appeared, to the members of the community who attended, to the team at his office who successfully put together the event and to the local print, television and radio media outlets for their help in publicizing the forum.